

**TIBETANS AS A DIPLOMATIC ISSUE
BETWEEN CHINA AND
SOUTH ASIAN STATES**

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Executive Summary

1. Self-immolations by Tibetans to express opposition to the Chinese government for its control of Tibetan Buddhism and their desire for the return of Tibet's exiled spiritual leader – the Dalai Lama – may be China's problem, but it could also affect South Asian states. Tibetans in India and Nepal had also died from self-inflicted burns.
2. As China's economic power increases relative to the West, the Tibetan issue now appears to have been put on the backburner. For Japanese and Indian politicians, any decision to voice concern for the human rights of Tibetans in China is dependent on their countries' relations with China.
3. The Chinese government is vigilant about the Dalai Lama as he has a base in India, leads an organized religious following worldwide, and serves as an inspiration for a nationalist cause as leader of the 'Tibetan Government-in-Exile' in Dharamsala, India.
4. The Dalai Lama has called for "genuine autonomy" for Tibetan-populated areas in China, with the central government in charge of Tibet's defense and diplomatic matters and the local government administering education, resource utilization, the environment, religious issues and immigration controls. The Chinese government considers his demands separatist.
5. Despite China's protests, in November 2009, India allowed the Dalai Lama to travel to and preach at a monastery in Tawang, a town within the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as South Tibet.
6. Tibetan resistance movement after the 14th Dalai Lama is likely to develop thus: First, both the Dalai Lama and China want to choose the next Dalai Lama, but this may split the Tibetans and heighten Tibetan resentment and security risks in Tibet.

7. Second, the Tibetan Youth Congress, founded by young Tibetan exiles, opposes the non-violence principle advocated by the current Dalai Lama in favor of agitating for Tibet's independence, and may capture and radicalize the Tibetan nationalist movement with his passing.
8. Third, possible challenges to the future Dalai Lama from other religious figures within Tibetan Buddhism may lead them all to garner support by championing extremist anti-Chinese actions.
9. Tibetans refugees in India could take up full Indian citizenship, but few do so as they intend to return to Tibet one day. Unemployed young Tibetan refugees in India make them a receptive target for radical anti-China messages.
10. The Indian government officially tolerates only the Dalai Lama's religious activities, but does not interfere with political ones if they are conducted within the confines of Dharamsala and the Tibetan settlements. With the boundary problem with China unresolved, India is unlikely to evict the Dalai Lama or the Tibetan refugee community.
11. Since Nepal's monarchy was toppled in 2008, the country's government has been moving diplomatically closer from India to China. China has since been providing aid to Nepal for its military and police, and for building roads and dams. In return, China expects Nepal to tighten surveillance over gatherings of Tibetan refugees in that country.